

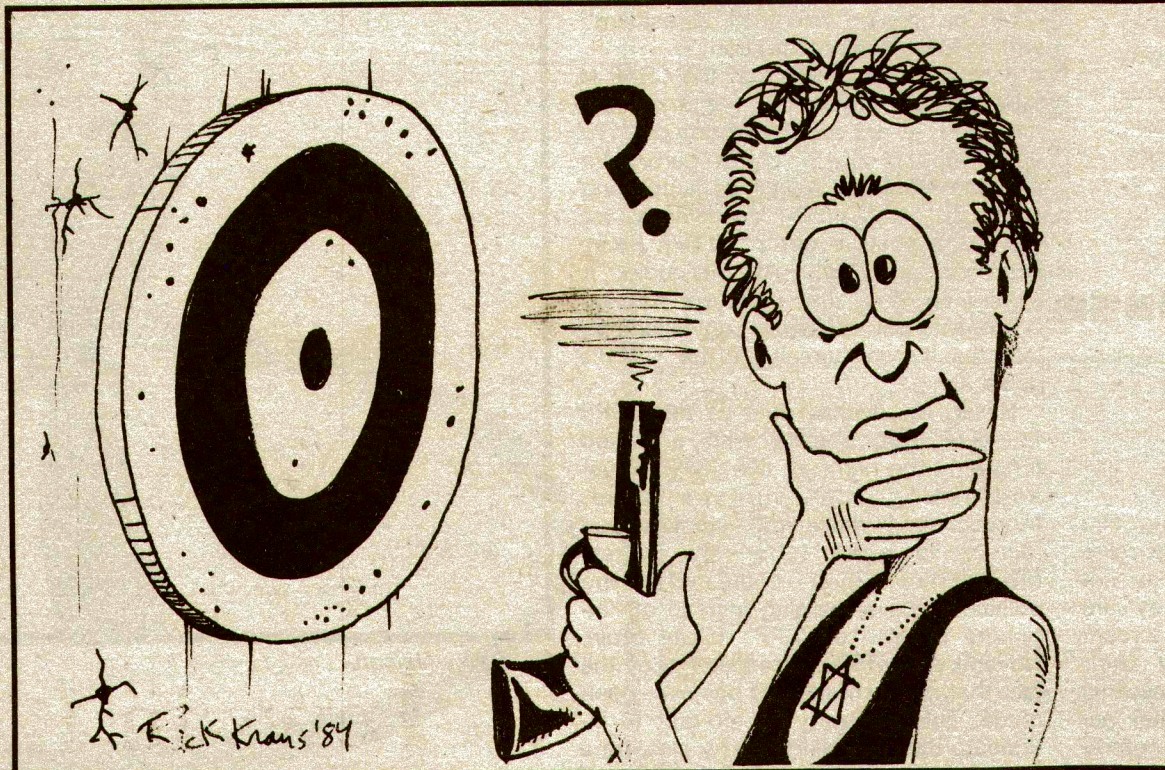
A Last Look at the Israeli Olympic Team

By Mitch Bard

The results are in; Israel failed to win its first Olympic medal in the summer Olympics in Los Angeles. The Israelis best hope was two sailors in the 470 class of yaughting, but they finished far behind the rest. Jewish sailors? Come on. When have you ever heard of a Jewish naval captain? I know, you are all saying to yourselves: "What about Noah?" Noah could not sail, all he did was float. He did not even know where he was going. God was not about to let the ark sink after all the trouble he put Noah through. Besides, there would be no animals for zoos. The miracle of that story was that Noah and his family were able to stand the stench of all those animals for so long. Jobe was even worse; you know where his aquatic adventure ended.

Forgive the digression, the Greeks were a naval power, the Jews were a land power. Given such a legacy you would expect the Israelis to have performed well in fencing, yet all they could muster was 16th place. Less surprising was the performance of the competitors in the foil competition. The Israelis had entered the event thinking they would be timed to see how fast they could wrap a kugel in foil.

The one event the Israelis would be expected to excel in was rifle shooting. You would think a country in which almost



everyone has a gun and serves in the army would have great markspeople. After the Israeli representative finished out of the medals in the event, he was asked why Israelis didn't have better aim. He replied that there was no time to practice shooting. Honest, that is what he said. I don't mean to poke fun at the Israeli Olympic team, after all, the ideal is not to win but to take part (and if you believe that I've got some beachfront property in the Negev I'd like to sell you). After Munich, it takes a great deal of

courage for the athletes to even attend, especially when faced with the hypocrisy of the International Olympic Committee which refuses to honor the memory of the athletes slain by PLO terrorists. Despite all this, I can't help wondering what would have happened if some of the great Jewish athletes in history had competed in the Olympics.

How many people, for example, know that the hammer throw originated with David's slingshot. David was renowned for his accuracy and also his

cockiness. It seems that one day, in the midst of the conflict with the Philistines, one of David's rivals was taunting him and said he couldn't hit the side of a pyramid with a pebble. "Oh yea," replied David, who even at a young age exhibited a gift for oratory. "I'll bet I can knock that Philistine's head off with one shot." His friend countered: "I'll bet you a Michelob Light I'll hit him in the groin first, and then knock his head off." Well, we all know what happened after that. What most people do not know is

that the Greeks had trouble knocking heads off with pebbles so they decided to attach a steel ball to the end of the sling and throw the whole thing at their enemies. Today we call that the hammer throw.

There have been many great Jewish athletes, but perhaps none greater than Samson. There is no doubt he could have won the weight lifting events, the only question would have been whether the IOC would have instituted regulations on the length of competitors' hair. And how about Moses in the swimming events. He could part the water in his lane and run laps while the rest of the field tries to catch up swimming. Let's not forget one of the great gymnasts whose balance is still a legend in Jewish tradition. I'm talking, of course, about Hillel. Asking Hillel to teach the entire Torah while standing on one foot was like Mary Lou Retton to say the alphabet while doing somersaults.

Not only are Jews great athletes, but they are also great referees. I guarantee you one thing, the Russian gymnasts would not get 10's from Solomon. The one thing we do lack is a great Jewish sportswriter, though I can think of one on the verge of prominence. Just telling it like it is, folks.

Mitch Bard is a fine human.

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